



Milwaukee County Office of the Sheriff

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NEWS RELEASE

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Sheriff Reminds People to Refrain from Celebratory Gunfire at Midnight on New Years Day

MILWAUKEE, WI - Milwaukee County Sheriff David Clarke is issuing a warning to citizens who celebrate the New Year by firing guns into the air. Even though some consider the random gunfire a tradition, it is extremely dangerous and a violation of the law. Such behavior puts citizens, law enforcement officers and firefighters at risk.

Many people think that when they fire a gun into the air, the bullet falls harmlessly to the ground. This is not true. Bullets can travel two miles upward. As a bullet falls from this distance, it can fall 300 to 700 feet per second. A bullet falling 200 feet per second can penetrate the human skull.

In densely populated urban areas, this behavior is not only illegal -- it's reckless. There is no way of predicting where the bullet will land. Criminal charges for this type of offense range from *Endangering Safety by Use of a Dangerous Weapon* to *Reckless Homicide* in the event of death. Penalties range from nine months to 25 years in prison.

Historically, around 12am on Jan 1st, calls to 9-1-1 dispatch centers and local police agencies increase as citizens report sounds of gunfire. At times, the volume of calls may create a strain on dispatchers answering calls for service.

Anyone who witnesses citizens randomly firing a gun should immediately call their local police agency with a complete description and location of the suspects.

*(**Media Interviews Available Upon Request**)*